



Relevance of the ARBORETUM BRAND
in contemporary culture:
staying rooted in horticultural heritage
or cultivating an experience beyond the
beauty of the garden.

Judy Hohmann
Capstone Project
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About the Author

Judy Hohmann joined the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in fall, 2007 as manager of marketing and public relations. In 2009, her duties expanded, as manager of marketing and communications, to include events, membership and overall brand management. Under Judy's leadership, her team was a key factor in building visitorship 22.8% from 2007-2012 and in surpassing \$1 million in membership sales annually 2011-2012.

In 2011, Judy was named to the American Public Garden Association (APGA) program committee as co-chair for marketing and visitor experience tracks to build professional development for annual conferences 2012-13. This experience and Judy's prior job experiences, particularly as copywriter for Target, as director of communications and marketing at Metropolitan Council and Twin Cities Public Television, and as division manager for Hennepin County Libraries have helped shape her creativity and strategic thinking; and sharpened her brand-building skills.

Overall, the capstone project has inspired an Arboretum brand strategy of greater relevance and a more engaging experience. Judy plans to share capstone project results with her marketing and membership teams and Arboretum colleagues to develop an implementation strategy. In addition, with her APGA colleagues, she plans to share findings, seek strategic feedback and present a case study at future conference sessions.

Introduction

An analysis of an aging brand—in this case, the Arboretum brand—is critical to gauge performance, vibrancy and overall relevance in contemporary culture. The relevance of brand helps predict its staying power and strength against competing brands. What is the relevance of the Arboretum brand—created more than a half-century ago and strongly rooted in its horticulture heritage? What is impact on new generations? Is the brand experience perceived as meaningful if subsequent generations are not active gardeners? How does the brand relationship measure up against competing brands?

Annual visitors' surveys, most recently conducted in fall, 2012, give a snapshot of an Arboretum visitor, their preferences and attitudes once on-site. Respondents consistently indicate they come to the Arboretum to enjoy the gardens and outdoors (80%). Their perception of the uniqueness of the Arboretum is to connect with nature and the outdoors (81%). The survey consisted of 18 questions, with 536 respondents (132 incomplete responses) and included demographic information and incentive of a prize drawing for completing the survey.

Overview

A. Background information

The Minnesota Landscape Arboretum was created 55 years ago, borne out of the Horticultural Research Center that was established 105 years ago as part of the University of Minnesota. The Men's Garden Club of Minneapolis and the Lake Minnetonka Garden Club donated the land that was the original site of the Arboretum, along with cold-hardy test plants that members were growing at their homesteads.

The Arboretum brand offering reflects its plants and garden heritage from this era. In addition to garden clubs, various plant societies were quite involved in the earliest

years of the Arboretum. Their love of gardening and plant expertise are still evident today, with several Arboretum gardens supported by the clubs and societies' annual donations and volunteer labor. However, since the era of 'victory gardens,' popularity of home gardening has declined, with active gardeners in just 37% of U.S households. ⁽¹⁾

In the early 2000 decade, many botanic gardens and arboretums throughout the country were launching special summertime exhibits to attract families with young children—an important demographic to supplement an aging public garden membership. To attract a family audience, the Arboretum opened a summer exhibit in 2003, resulting in a 6% increase in visitorship. The grand opening of the Oswald Visitor Center in 2005 forever changed the Arboretum's identity from a small public garden and research center to a top metro attraction. ⁽²⁾ The 45,000 square-foot visitor center serves as a major entry to gardens, with kiosks, Great Hall, meeting and event spaces, restaurant and gift store. An enclosed skyway connects to the 1974-era Snyder Building (named for founding director Leon Snyder).

Cited by USA Today as one of "10 great places to smell the flowers," ⁽³⁾ the Arboretum has evolved into a premier public garden of 1,200+ acres with nature-inspired seasonal exhibits and events, adult and family classes and programs. A popular venue for weddings (100+ annually) and business meetings, the Arboretum includes a Three-Mile Drive for pedestrians and vehicles, a network of trails for hiking, snowshoeing and

⁽¹⁾ The Impact of Home and Community Gardening, National Gardening Association, 2009

cross-country skiing; and in 2012, a trail link for bicyclists from the Minnewashta Parkway Trail. In 2008, a strong public relations, events and website strategy complemented a first-ever paid TV and radio advertising campaign paired with continuing print advertising. Starting in 2008, annual surveys provided a snapshot of visitor attitudes and preferences, and a tool to evaluate brand experience. The 2008 survey (and subsequent surveys) findings helped shape a repositioning of the Arboretum brand to be a moniker of the seasons (spring tulips, summer blooms, autumn color and harvest, winter trails). Visually, the seasonal images were predominant and the summer exhibit graphics became secondary, with messages emphasizing nature and the seasons.

In 2010, the brand image was modified to consistently incorporate people in gardens and seasonal images. In addition, the Arboretum expanded its brand presence in web promotion and search engine advertising. In 2011-2012, the Arboretum brand further increased its digital presence—on Facebook, electronic communications and social media. From 2008-12, these collective strategies helped increase visitorship overall by more than 21%. (4)

In recent years, the surveys of large gardens (budgets of \$10 million and larger) conducted by the American Public Garden Association (APGA) showed a decline in spending for summer exhibits as a sustainable means for double-digit increases in visitorship —exceptions were blockbuster exhibits such as the Chihuly glass sculptures or traveling exhibits such as Big Bugs by Dave Rogers.

The composite Arboretum visitor surveys from 2008-12 showed consistent insights—what brought respondents to the Arboretum were the gardens and

(4) Arboretum visitorship and exhibit annual comparisons

outdoors, with their discovery of exhibits taking place on-site (if they recalled seeing the exhibit). Typical summer exhibit funding of \$75,000-\$100,000 decreased to \$25,000 in 2013, with more operating dollars dedicated to support garden design and maintenance. The balance of exhibit budget was to be underwritten by sponsors at the \$50,000+ level.

B. Issues to investigate

Understanding that the relevance of an aging Arboretum brand and associated brand experience is essential to evaluating brand staying power and gauging loyalty with current members and visitors, brand relevance is critical for future growth as well. Comparing the perceived value or significance of the Arboretum brand with the perceived value or significance of relevant leisure experiences will provide insights into brand appeal, meaningful brand experience and successful brand relationships with generations that are not active gardeners. Insights from brand experts will help articulate an Arboretum brand personality that can differentiate against competing brands that appear to offer similar experiences or are competing for outdoor and leisure time.

Among the research issues to be investigated are: 1) how leisure interests compare among generations, 2) perceptions of interest in plants and gardens as a predictor for a visit to the Arboretum, 3) alignment of Arboretum brand with consumer interest in discovery and outdoor recreation, 4) how wellness and rejuvenation experiences are perceived in public garden settings and 5) the potential for brand identity or extension to special interests (trail and recreation enthusiasts, themed gardens, art and music).

Two capstone project research propositions to be investigated are: 1) extending the brand experience beyond the gardens and plant heritage and 2) expanding brand identity beyond a gardener persona to a nature explorer and outdoor enthusiast personality.

Literature Review/ Business Press/Academic Papers and Research

In the increasingly competitive marketplace, consumers that tended to be brand loyalists are found to be fickle. What is the state of brand relevance? On the one hand, research portrays consumers as more savvy and discerning—often making behavior and purchase decisions not only on the basis of product attributes but also on brand image and reputation as a mirror of their beliefs and cultural mores. On the other hand, some research paints a different picture of consumers—as distracted and overwhelmed at the amount of information for decision-making and brand purchase.

This dichotomy of engaged brand users is discussed in three articles from the business press including the HBR Blog Network, Forbes.com and the Harvard Business Review, offering timely but contrasting approaches to brand relevance and competitiveness of brands in contemporary culture. Brands need to assess relationships and consumer engagement to gauge whether to expand or simplify, so as not to interfere with brand decision-making. The authors' findings and positions all have direct application to the Arboretum brand in areas of relevance in contemporary culture, positioning for cross-generational appeal and relationship engagement. A key citation, Aaker (2012) describes a challenge of the marketplace, "A serious threat facing most brands in dynamic markets is the loss of relevance because the category or subcategory they are serving is declining. Customers are no longer buying what the brand is perceived to make. New categories or subcategories emerge as competitors' innovations create 'must haves.' This dynamic can happen even if the brand is strong; customers are loyal; and the offering has never been better, thanks to incremental innovations." (p. 1 of HBR blog). Aaker's strategies for relevance are to gain parity with competitors for consumers'

‘must-haves,’ leapfrog the innovation (requiring quite an investment), reposition your value proposition or stick to your strategy but do it better. Adamson (2010) asserts, “Success in branding is not just a matter of standing for something but ensuring that this difference is in tune with what consumers really want or need.” (p. 1 of Forbes.com blog). Adamson also cautions brands to be meaningful to peoples’ lives and not wait for evidence of change. Spenner and Freeman (2012) make the case to simplify. They present Corporate Executive Board research on what makes consumers ‘sticky’ or “...likely to follow through on an intended purchase, buy the product repeatedly and recommend it to others.” (p.108). Their characterization of marketers as bombarding consumers with information to engage is countered with making the decision-journey simple, citing as the single biggest driver of stickiness, “decision simplicity and the ease with which consumers can gather trustworthy information about a product to confidently weigh their purchase options.” (p.109). Spenner and Freeman advocate brands to emphasize trust and tools for decision-making, that is, “build cadres of trustworthy (consumer) advisers” and “provide tools that allow customers to identify and weigh the features that are most relevant.” (p.111).

Two academic research papers offer findings about museum and botanic gardens’ brand interpretation and positioning. These key citations relate to topic areas especially pertinent to the Arboretum brand as relevance and positioning are assessed. The research papers illustrate a seemingly common phenomenon among museum and attraction brands—the internal belief that visitors ‘should’ be receptive to the brand offering, even without their actual involvement in creating the content or engagement in shaping the brand relationship. This paradigm describes the gap in what brands feel are relevant

experiences and what consumers perceive as relevant experiences. A case study from researchers Becker and LaFleur (2010) is a tourism-based analysis of relevance of museums in Gulfport-Biloxi, Mississippi. In the case of these museums, their offerings and experiences were developed internally with good intentions, but in relative isolation and thus were not perceived by the community as relevant to their needs. This was evident in low visitorship and lack of community involvement. Becker and LaFleur's insights about museums that offer cultural or historic themes being more relevant to a community are elegantly simple and offer points of engagement for local residents. The researchers emphasize that "...although the museum sector is emerging from its tradition of elitism, the focus remains inwardly oriented with organizational failure often blamed on the public's ignorance or lack of motivation." (p. 592; Nichol, 2005). Their assessment of needed community partnerships, philanthropic proprietorships and controlling sponsorships is applicable for most non-profit attractions' success, including the Arboretum. (ppg. 596-7). Adding to this phenomenon of developing brand experiences without engagement from consumers is a case study by researchers Ballantyne, Parker and Hughes (2008), who present compelling findings about Mt. Coot-tha Botanic Garden and its unsuccessful conservation education program. The case study presented findings that botanic garden visitors were less interested to learn about conservation, which greatly surprised the garden staff, who perceived conservation as an obvious part of their organization mission. Instead, visitors cited as motivations for visiting the garden being appreciation of plants, interest in garden design and landscaping, pleasure in being outdoors with friends and family, and enjoying peace and tranquility in nature. The case study conclusions show that visitors perceive importance of the

restorative qualities of the botanic garden as greater than education and learning about conservation emphasized by staff. The study goes on to cite the need for a range of (brand) experiences to fit groups of different interest and ages. This case study on conservation interpretation for visitors is especially timely as the Arboretum was recently accepted into the international Center for Plant Conservation (CPC). As a CPC member, the Arboretum is expected to integrate improved sustainability practices in conservation and offer interpretive experiences for visitors about why plant conservation and preservation of endangered species is of critical importance. Case study insights should guide visitor engagement in developing content and messaging for interpretation in 2013.

A second collection of four academic papers addresses the evolving environment of brands—specifically traits, personality and identity; brand logic and radical brand evolution and evaluation. This research offers insights into ascertaining relevance of the Arboretum brand and its horticulture heritage, brand offer and potential to transform or expand a brand identity. The distinctions of corporate brand personality by Keller and Richey (2006) give human characteristics of “heart (passion/compassion), mind (creativity/discipline) and body (agile/collaborative)” when relating to values, words and actions in the relationships with consumers” (p. 76) —assets for messaging and brand attributes. For the Arboretum, these distinctions could well fit into what a public garden setting represents for respite, renewal and rejuvenation, for example. Another key citation argues a contrasting argument in that Scott (2000) presents a case study in the struggle of the Powerhouse Museum brand to distinguish itself as an appealing destination against competing leisure attractions (p. 36). Scott’s research showed what consumers perceived as museum experiences to be distinctly different from what they perceived as fun and

entertaining leisure experiences. Perceptions of leisure experiences were based on survey descriptors of “relaxed atmosphere, entertaining, good place for family and friends, friendly and fun, exciting place to be and great value” (p. 37). In contrast, survey descriptors for the museum focused on “educational, places of discovery, intellectual experience, challenging, thought provoking, absorbing, fascinating, innovative, and places where you can touch the past.” (p.37). While Scott points out that museums would argue that they are fun, exciting, a good place for family and friends, and a great value, (p. 37) there is a “lack of alignment” for visitor respondents between what an ideal leisure attraction offers and what museums are perceived to offer. Scott posits that “...museum marketing is failing to capitalize on these attributes to demonstrate the valid synergy between what consumers want and what museums have to offer.” (p. 37). This is especially evident in descriptions of consumer behavior for frequency of participation, attitudes of ideal leisure attractions and general value. Scott argues that the opportunity exists for museums to include in their branding the “attributes associated with an ideal leisure experience (i.e., great value for the whole family, discover the fun” (p. 37). Scott’s research findings provided insights into this capstone project’s primary research on outdoor experiences and perceived Arboretum brand relevance, and comparison to outdoor leisure experiences.

At the Arboretum, the brand offer for visitors and brand story differs, contingent upon the staff. For example, gardeners are attuned to horticultural science data collection such as tracking growth of plant collections and testing of cultivars, not visitors. Staff educators are attuned to teaching visitors about plants and horticultural learning. Marketing and communications staff is attuned to promoting visitors to explore nature as

part of leisure activities. Events staff are attuned to invite visitors be entertained by exhibits and events. While the brand may inherently be a mix of these, the visitor experience is not seamless, resulting in a confusing brand relationship.

A key element relating to brand relevance pertains to the brand relationship and engagement with the consumer—specifically co-creation. Research on the role of collaborative value co-creation with consumers and activists as the foundation for a “service-dominant brand logic” presented by Merz, He and Vargo (2004) is especially significant. The authors argue on behalf of evolving brand experience, especially as it applies to employees and evolution of brand promise. What is the Arboretum brand offer for visitors? When Arboretum gardeners give talks at the Spring Expo, needs of novice gardeners should be considered. When Arboretum educators interpret composting practices to enrich soil, the motivation and interests of visitors should be considered. When Arboretum membership incentives are developed, member interests and co-creation opportunity should be considered. When Arboretum exhibits are planned, interests of prospective sponsors, visitors and opportunity for co-creation should be considered. An attempt at co-creation is the example of the Arboretum Home Demo gardens. Gardening designs, growing tips, progress of the harvest, photos and cooking ideas are shared via a weekly blog, while also asking visitors to post their gardening experiences and share photos. If not an active gardener, a secondary theme is inviting visitors to share experiences at farmers markets, tips on cooking with fresh and recipes, and more.

Another academic paper is a compelling argument for “reconceptualizing brand identity” by da Silveira, Lages and Simões (2011). The paper advances the notion of brand identity as “dynamic and emanating from multiple actors, e.g. brand managers and

consumers.” (p. 1). As Aaker and Adamson have argued, a brand can be reinvented to respond to changing market conditions or evolve to be more relevant and fit the needs and interests of target consumers, without losing its core values. The academic research authors propose a brand identity framework with the dimensions of “brand identity, brand face, consumer’s face, encounters and contextual factors (e.g., competitors)” and assert “developing a brand identity as a function of integration with consumers, thereby optimizing their marketing and communication strategies in an increasingly dynamic environment.” (p. 8). It posits that a “dynamic platform for enduring brand identity hints at flexibility to let the brand evolve and respond to market changes, while maintaining consistency” in the form of core values maintaining consistency, even as “other dimensions vary, when needed, to adjust to context” (p.7). This research provides a strong foundation and inspiration for transforming the Arboretum brand in concert with co-creation of content and experience with consumers (e.g., members and visitors).

Four academic research studies offer findings on brand extension strategies and brand relationships including brand revival. For the Arboretum brand, research insights can provide guidance in “revitalizing” a brand to be more relevant and/or determining potential brand extensions that are consistent with brand identity. A case study by Merriless (2005) argues that revitalizing a brand is a key business strategy and highlights the importance of brand evolution as a necessary component of a successful marketing strategy. In particular, the study emphasizes the decision to revitalize the core brand and three key constructs as a framework for analysis—re-branding vision, orientation and strategy. For example, a more dynamic brand personality would evolve a “home gardener” to a hipper “urban gardener,” “foodie devotee” and “nature explorer.”

Another brand extension study by Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003) examined literature on brand revival, brand heritage and nostalgia to conceptualize retro-marketing and retro brands. This study analyzed use of an abandoned brand and reviving it to introduce a new product—a practice that appears to be gaining industry traction, so as to warrant a moniker—“retro branding.” With a revival of brand meaning in retro brands, the authors conduct a “netnography analysis” or “transplantation of ethnography...to cyberspace” immersing themselves in online consumer cultures for the particular retro-brand. An example in the study looks at how Volkswagen online communities were engaged in the introduction of the “New Beetle,” with use of “Allegory (brand story), Aura (brand essence), Arcadia (idealized community) and Antinomy (brand paradox) in re-launching the VW Bug.” A second retro-brand roll out was the re-release of Star Wars Episode 1—The Phantom Menace. The use of retro-branding nostalgia, heritage and revival offers potential application to the Arboretum brand’s horticultural heritage and opportunity to re-launch a more contemporary gardening brand experience. Since the authors contend that retro-brands need to be modernized, transforming the Arboretum brand experience lies in moving the experience beyond the beauty of the gardens.

Defense of brand in the marketplace and against attacks to brand integrity is the scenario in emotional branding and forewarning to the case study presented by Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006) in their study of powerful brands like Starbucks and the retaliatory advocacy of anti-brand activists. This movement underscores community conversation (especially on social media) and consumer brand relationships. For the Arboretum, these learnings inform strategies to address the “anti-growth” attitudes vocalized by a small percentage of members who are not admirers of outdoor art and

sculpture in the new sculpture garden, long for the “old Arboretum” of the original Snyder Building and untouched woodlands, and want to enjoy their Arboretum without the “crowds” that new gardens such as the proposed amphitheater, canopy walk or bee outreach center would inevitably bring. Research presented by Louro and Cunha (2001) on brand management paradigms to create more brand value provides a framework for defining competitive advantage, refining brand promise and aligning brand processes for best practices, defining focus and implementation. These are “a deep-seated way of seeing and managing brands and their value, shared by the members of an organizational community marked by a common culture” (p. 853) with focus on product (marketing mix), projective (brand identity), adaptive (brand image) and relational (relationship).

A journal article on Generational Theory by Howe and Strauss (2007) assumes the role of “big picture” strategist and looks out over the next 20 years, presenting updated “measures of predictability and long-term trends” to the sequence of generations. This information can benefit the Arboretum brand, rooted in a horticulture heritage dating back 100+ years, and drawing from multiple generations such as Silent, Boomer and Millennial, including those who grew up within a culture of home gardening, garden clubs, plant societies and garden lovers. Looking at relevance of the Arboretum brand, particularly with the segment of consumers with home gardens at 37% nationally, generational values and milestones can help define brand experience that makes a strong connection with a generation. While more than a third of American households still are engaged in gardening, the Arboretum brand should welcome visitors without an affinity for gardening and not preclude them as a prospect for visiting due to lack of gardening knowledge, skills or interests. The Arboretum will need to differentiate messages based

on: 1) ways to communicate based on milestone history events, 2) preferred leadership styles, 3) varied work style and lifestyle experiences and 4) core values. (pp. 44-45).

There are opportunities for segmented messaging on the Arboretum website, advertising (print, broadcast, digital and search engine modes) and direct mail (member household vs. prospective household) and guerilla marketing (e.g., parades and community fairs).

Primary Research: Questions/Propositions/Plan

Formulating research propositions for relevant engagement are critical in deepening the Arboretum brand relationship in contemporary culture. Must the Arboretum brand relationship, rooted in horticulture, transform from its gardening heritage due to changing trends in gardening and consumer interest? How can a valued brand relationship with active gardeners, lovers of gardens and horticulture educators evolve? Case studies of museums, gardens and attractions; best practices and academic research in brand evolution; primary research of Arboretum members/friends and outdoor enthusiasts and brand strategists will help illuminate Arboretum brand relevance in today's environment.

The Capstone Project **research question** asks “is the Arboretum brand still relevant in contemporary culture?” The relevance of the Arboretum brand and findings can guide whether to pursue strengthening its relevance to gardens so as to be better and stronger than competitors or whether to cultivate a more defined relevance to nature and the outdoors. Research **propositions** in turn, address two areas, with the first proposing to extend the brand experience beyond gardens and plants heritage. As part of extending the brand experience, two topics to investigate are reshaping brand experience from educating and teaching about horticulture to add discovery of outdoors and engagement in nature; and refining brand appeal to correspond with phases of behavior and emotion identified in

Generational Theory. The second research proposition addresses expanding the brand personality beyond active gardener and casual observer of beauty of the gardens. As part of transforming the brand personality, two topics to investigate are rebranding of active gardener to also include nature explorer and perhaps outdoor enthusiast.

The **Primary Research Plan** features original research, consisting of two phases, the first being quantitative online surveys—an Arboretum brand survey targeted to Arboretum members and visitors (ages 21+) who have likely visited the Arboretum at least once in the past two years; and a leisure survey targeted to a sample of adults age 21+ who are active internet users and unlikely to have visited Arboretum recently (and are not aware that the survey is issued by the Arboretum). The research goal is to compare perceptions and attitudes about outdoor and leisure experiences, museums and outdoor attractions, and perceptions about family activities and brand relevance. The second phase is a qualitative survey with the research goal to gather brand insights and perceptions of brand relevance. Intensive surveys and followup with four brand strategists focus on brand positioning and identity, perceptions regarding Arboretum credibility in a number of areas relating to brand experience, brand competitive strength, messaging, and impressions of a strategy to extend and/or transform the brand persona.

Research Methods & Data Collection: Primary Quantitative

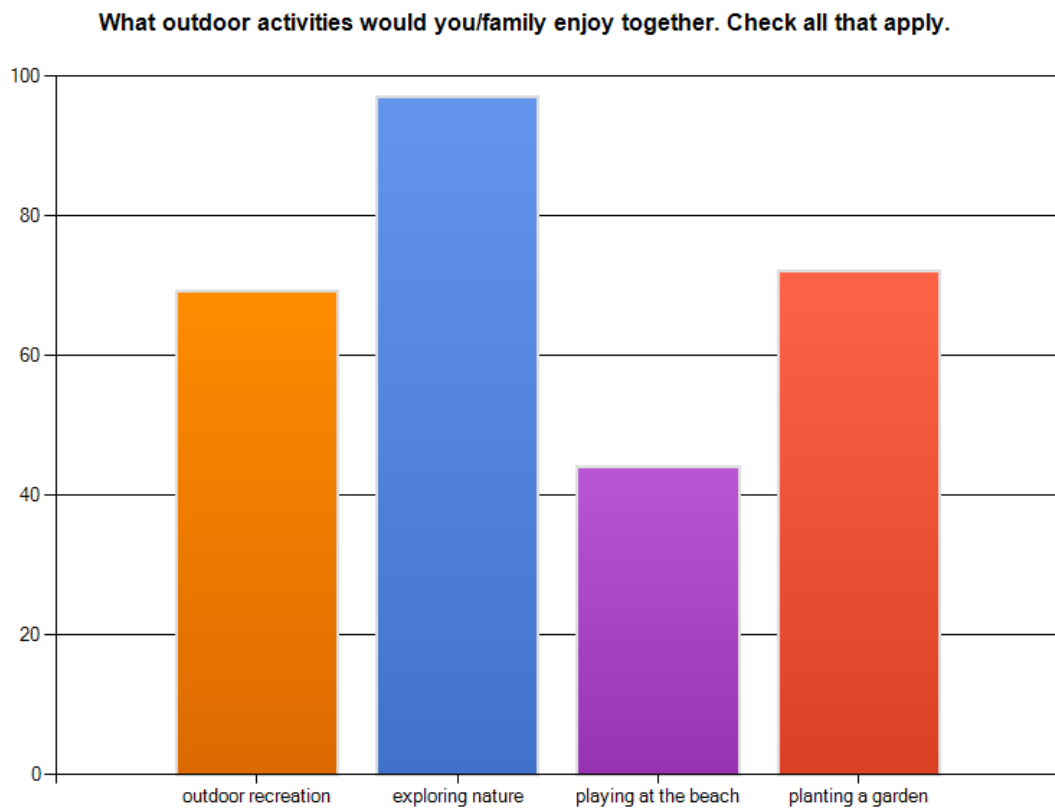
The Arboretum Member/Visitor eNews served as the distribution vehicle for a quantitative online Arboretum brand survey. The eNews audience is mostly Arboretum members with some visitor/non-members who can subscribe at no cost and have likely visited the Arboretum in the past two years. The brand survey was distributed to the

Arboretum eNews subscriber list on April 17, 2013 to 10,000+ email subscribers with a survey link to Survey Monkey. The **brand survey** consisted of 16 questions including demographic information, with an incentive to be entered into a prize drawing if respondent completed survey and provided email. There were 106 respondents with 4 incomplete responses. Top level findings showed a high perceived relevance of Arboretum experiences to what respondent/family considered as enjoyable outdoor experiences. The brand survey also showed that respondents prefer to explore nature and plant a garden; more than half are without kids in outdoor activity, don't expect exercise or fitness at the Arboretum and enjoy the discovery of something fun or new.

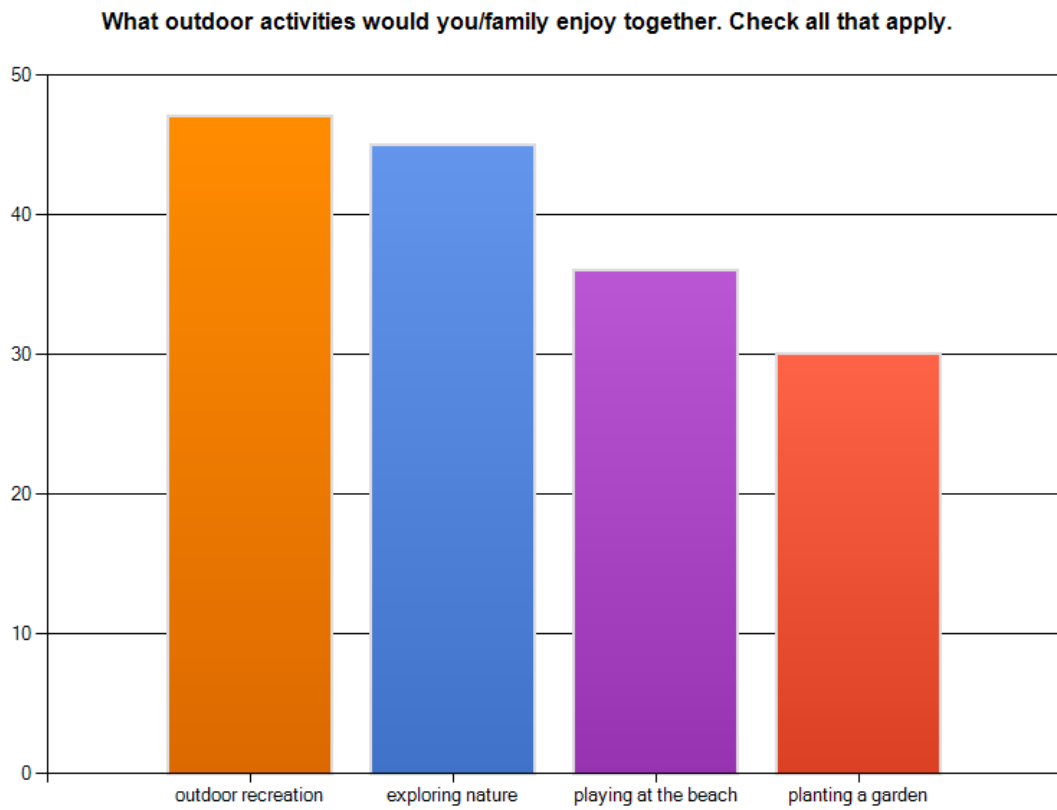
The second primary research survey is a quantitative online **leisure survey**, targeted to convenience samples through two different outlets. The first convenience sample was of internet users who are unlikely to be regular Arboretum visitors or members. This survey was distributed through KARE 11.com with a link to Survey Monkey, and promoted through a series of no-cost digital ads on the KARE 11 website during a 24 hour period on April 25, 2013. About 100,000 ad impressions were estimated, based on KARE 11.com data. The second convenience sample consisted of mixed-ages neighbors, friends, colleagues and acquaintances that were not likely to be Arboretum members or recent visitors. This sample was distributed through an e-blast asking for participation and offering opportunity to be entered into a drawing to win various gift cards. The leisure survey featured 20 questions including demographic information and an incentive to enter into a prize drawing if survey was completed. There were 57 respondents (with 4 incomplete responses) to the leisure survey. Top level findings showed respondents were more inclined to be outdoor enthusiasts in a group that included children (generally asking

if children of a particular age would be likely to accompany them) than were respondents to the brand survey. The leisure survey respondents showed a preference for outdoor recreation, exploring nature, and activities for all ages. They found arboretum/nature centers relevant to their lifestyle. Like brand survey respondents, they do not expect exercise or fitness at arboretums/nature centers.

Brand Survey chart 1

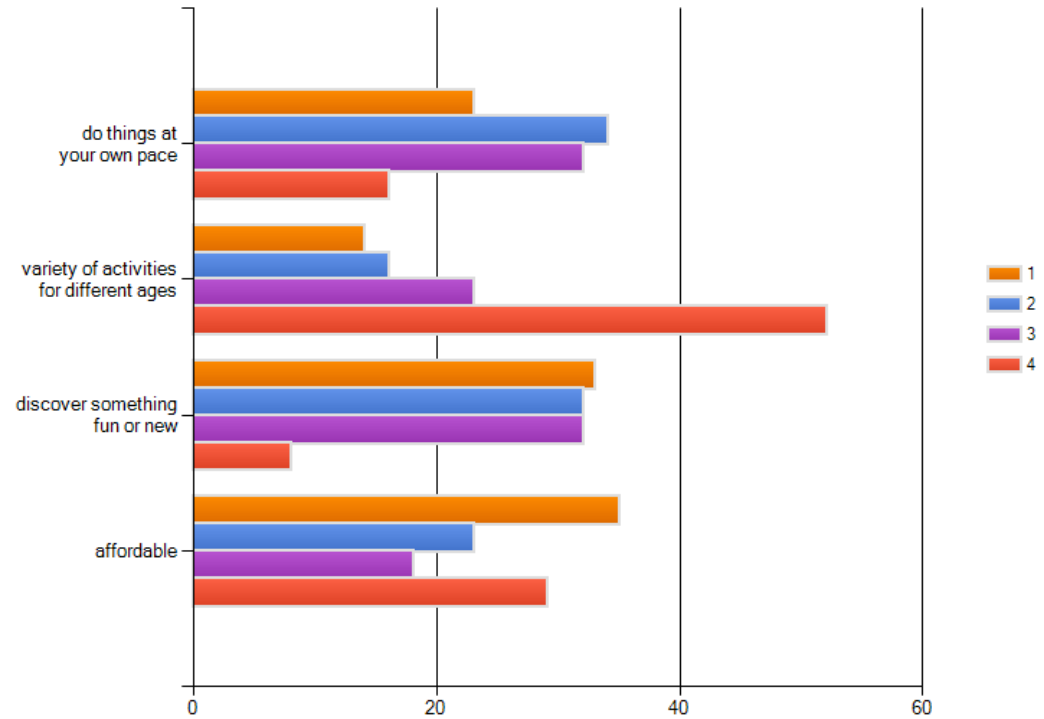


Leisure Survey chart 1



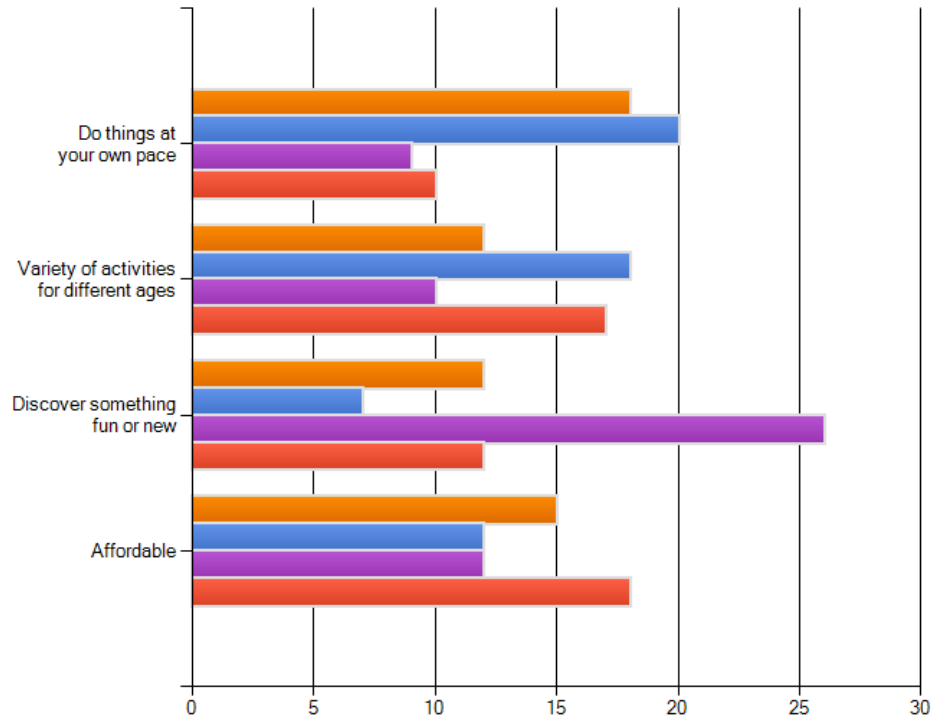
Brand survey chart 3a

What qualities are most important for a great family outing. Rank qualities with 1 as highest choice and 4 as lowest choice



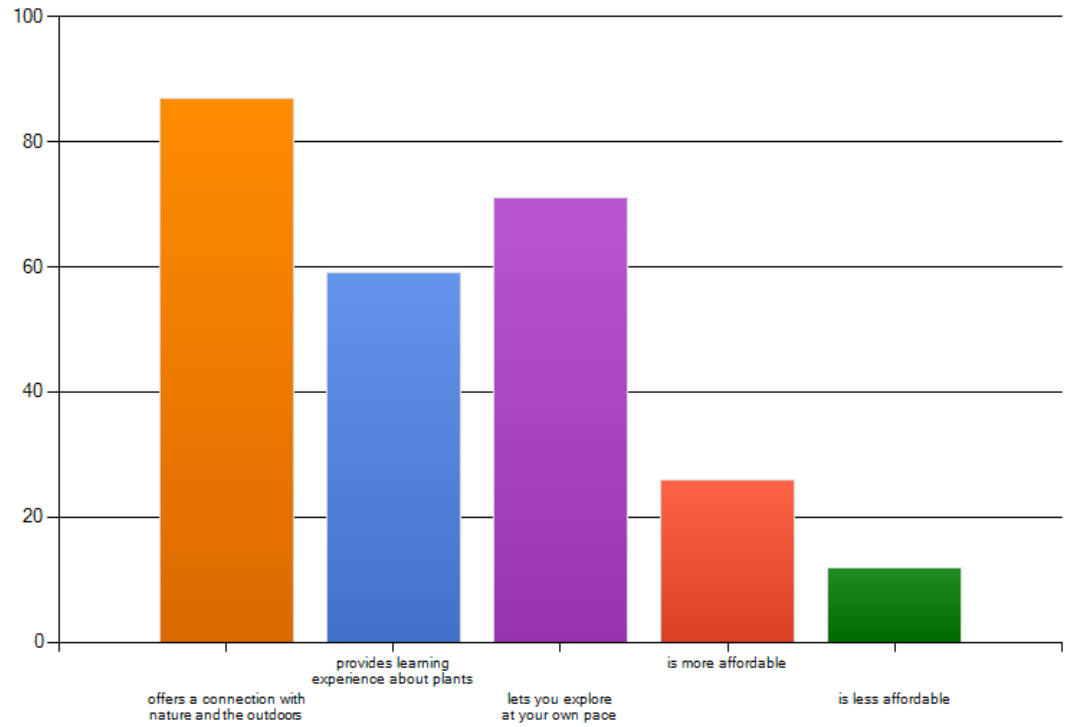
Leisure Survey chart 3a

What qualities are most important for a great family outing. Rank qualities with 1 as highest choice and 4 as lowest choice

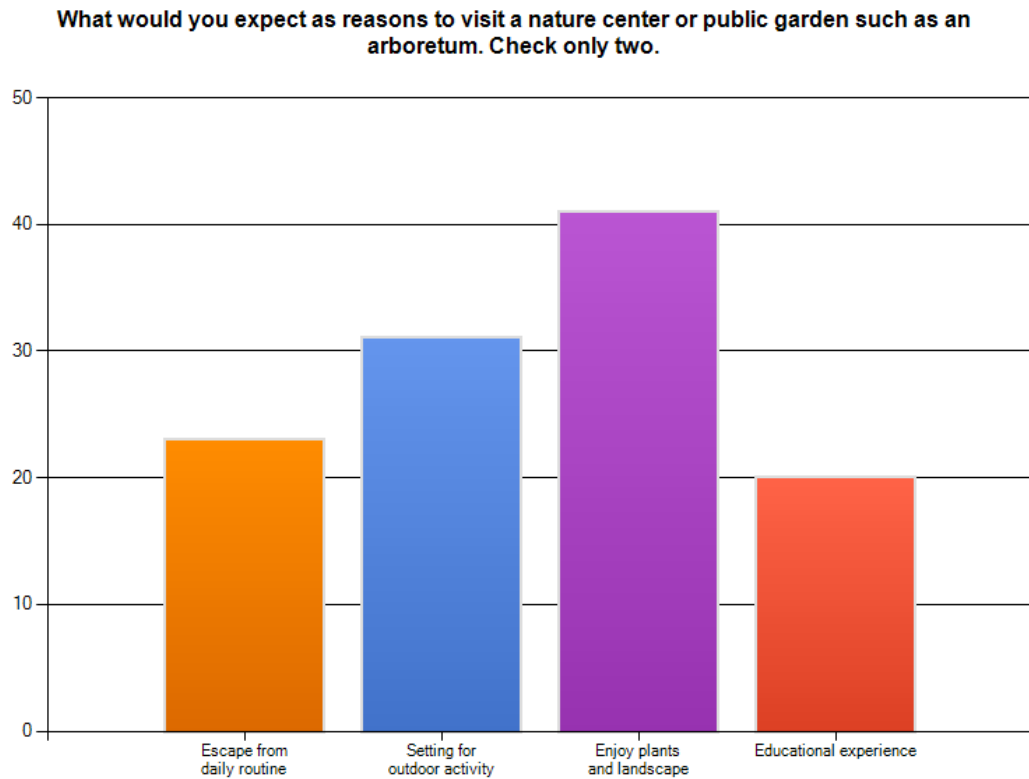


Brand survey chart 3

What is unique about the Arboretum compared to other places your family visits for a fun outing.



Leisure survey chart 3



Findings/ Discussion/Summary

Findings. The brand survey and leisure survey results showed **key differences** in several areas. For fun family outdoor outings, brand survey respondents were more inclined to explore nature and plant a garden while the sample of internet users (who were non-Arboretum visitors) showed a preference for outdoor recreation, with exploring nature a close second choice. More than half of the brand survey respondents were not coming to the Arboretum with children under age 18 (although more than one-third of respondents were); and nearly 60% of leisure survey respondents were accompanied by children in outdoor activities—likely due to demographics of respondents for the leisure survey

skewing slightly younger and more likely to be parents (which tends to fit the slightly younger viewing audience for KARE 11 compared to other local television stations.)

(Appendix 5) When asked what qualities are most important for a great family outing, brand survey respondents ranked discovering something fun or new as lowest, compared to leisure survey respondents who ranked that highest. For relevant experiences of what arboretums and nature centers offer to individuals/families, 83% of brand survey respondents agreed while 72% of leisure survey respondents agreed (leaving nearly 30% not perceiving the experience to be very relevant). Reasons to visit an arboretum or nature center featured more similar responses of enjoying gardens and outdoors. (Note: the 2012 Arboretum visitor survey was at 80% for this response).

With societal concern about exercise and fitness, this was a consideration in planning family outings for both samples of survey respondents. However, one striking finding was that 66% of leisure survey respondents would not expect exercise or wellness activities at a nature center or arboretum, but were more open to using outdoors as a setting for family/friends activity. Brand survey respondents would not expect exercise or wellness activities at the Arboretum, but connecting with nature was important.

Both samples of survey respondents ranked ‘doing things at your own pace’ moderately high. Brand survey respondents ranked ‘discovering something fun or new’ as the highest, compared to leisure survey respondents who ranked ‘activities for different ages’ as the highest. Both groups rate ‘affordability’ lower in importance.

The Arboretum member and visitor survey respondent is primarily female at

nearly 85% and older, with 42% in age 55-64 category, 22% in 65-74 category and nearly 20% in age 45-54 category. The leisure survey respondent is primarily female at nearly 72% but skews a bit younger, with 36% in age 55-64 category, 21% in age 65-74 category, 12% in age 45-54 category and nearly 16% in age 35-44 category.

Discussion. The convenience samples for both brand and leisure surveys posit strong support for enjoying outdoor activities, although the type of activity preference varies slightly by sample, reflecting less prominence for horticulture/planting a garden among leisure survey respondents. (Note: The National Gardening Association survey showed growth in home gardens but it is still far from being dominant).

Summary. Both samples of the quantitative survey findings provide insight into the research proposition to extend the Arboretum's brand offer beyond its gardens and plants heritage. The perception of a nature center or arboretum for outdoor activity, exploring nature, and enjoying gardens and the outdoors would expand the brand offer to attract younger audiences and families who may not have strong affinity for gardening or plants.

Primary quantitative research insights thus encourage a refresh of the brand experience around outdoor fun and leisure as more appealing and fun in contemporary culture. Reshaping the Arboretum brand to incorporate generational theory with a corresponding suite of outdoor experiences for multiple ages to connect to nature, will draw in young families and multiple generations, inviting those without an affinity or deep knowledge of gardens. To be more relevant, the brand must move beyond the beauty of the gardens and expand brand identity further than active gardeners and garden observers to include nature explorers and outdoor enthusiasts. This welcomes a broader slice of visitors, inviting engagement and co-creation in sharing outdoor experiences.

Research Methods & Data Collection: Primary Qualitative

A series of qualitative intensive surveys with four brand strategists offer findings and insights that will help shape the Arboretum brand strategy and brand creative. A reshaping of the Arboretum brand personality and experience will transform brand positioning and messaging to become more relevant to contemporary culture. A reboot of the telling of the Arboretum story using brand relevance survey findings will help distinguish the Arboretum advertising, promotion, visitor collateral and communications from competitors to prospective visitors. Using consumer engagement and co-creation to help tell story through inter-generational voices will deepen the brand relationship.

The primary qualitative research for the capstone project is a series of surveys and followup interviews with four brand strategists. Three are presidents of small businesses in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area (two males, one female) and one (female) is a professor of communications at a state university. These respondents were selected for their familiarity with the Arboretum (either as members or visitors) and their recognized expertise in brand strategy and communications. Two have provided Arboretum professional brand communications services in the past. Two do not have professional working relationships with the Arboretum. The online brand relevance survey, open by invitation only, featured 17 questions that included some cross-over questions from the brand survey and leisure survey. The relevance survey included “must-have” queries (inspired by Aaker) in the form of attributes that the Arboretum must have to be a competitive metro area attraction. The survey also asked their perception of the Arboretum’s degree of credibility in brand areas such as beautiful gardens and wonders of nature; nature-inspired exhibits, gardening classes and events; a fun experience that

families can enjoy; and programs on issues relating to nature and the environment. The nearly unanimous responses and similar ratings by strategists on particular brand relevance and positioning questions were remarkable. As followup to the online survey, in-person or email interviews were held with each strategist to probe their responses.

Findings/Discussion/Summary

One brand strategist (Thomas) elaborated on ‘must-haves’ by stating, “...first and foremost, people are expecting a visual wow when they come in” and cites “interpretation” as needing to address “what does it mean...what they (consumers) got out of it. Often our (the Arboretum) interpretation come across as lecturing.” Another brand strategist (Wilson) explained her neutral rating of the Arboretum’s ability to be a category leader for “families seeking a fun experience” citing low awareness of year-round kid-centric activities. In repositioning brand, she emphasized benefit, emotion and engagement as a way to differentiate from competitors such as Three Rivers Park district. Another brand strategist (Bellmont) noted that “nature-inspired exhibits build the Arboretum’s credibility as a thought-leader.” He tied exhibits to brand personality, stating “..exhibits that are most successful are the ones that are most accessible, such as Big Bugs or the Big Build. These are still educational but have a real interactive ‘my kid will be entertained by this’ feel. I’d encourage the Arboretum to build its brand more as “Everyday with Rachel Ray,” a lifestyle publication, rather than “Fine Gardening.” Another brand strategist (Heinrich) urged the Arboretum to “...play to its strengths, hold to its brand. There should be an immediately logical connection between activities and what you are, an arboretum.” As for transforming brand identity, she asks, “Could

‘active gardener’ be subsumed under ‘nature explorer’? I think gardening can be seen as a form of exploring.”

The qualitative intensive interview research findings include 12 sets of brand data, highlights which are summarized below. They agree must-haves are “beautiful gardens and wonders of nature,” and “a fun experience that families can enjoy,” with a majority also naming “programs on issues relating to nature and the environment.” All strategists name major competitors as Como Conservatory & Zoo, Three Rivers Parks and Minnesota Zoo.

The brand experts ranked the Arboretum on *some* degree of public credibility for “beautiful gardens and wonders of nature”; for “nature-inspired exhibits, gardening classes, events”; for “fun experience that families can enjoy”; and for “programs on issues relating to nature and environment.” All cited the Arboretum as offering a relevant experience. Although there was great diversity in where the Arboretum could (and should) be a category leader, all strategists agreed the Arboretum brand is currently not a substantial brand leader in any category (even though many Arboretum staff consider the Arboretum as the dominant leader in categories of beautiful gardens and wonders of nature; nature-inspired exhibits, classes, events—only one strategist rated credibility high). Half of the brand strategists identified the foremost brand attribute to be a place to learn about gardens and landscapes, followed by a place to discover nature; and all agreed that as a place to enjoy with family and friends was secondary. The brand strategists cited as not dominant, the attribute of a place to relax and re-charge, independently supporting primary quantitative survey findings of not expecting the Arboretum to be a place for fitness and exercise. The majority of brand strategists cited

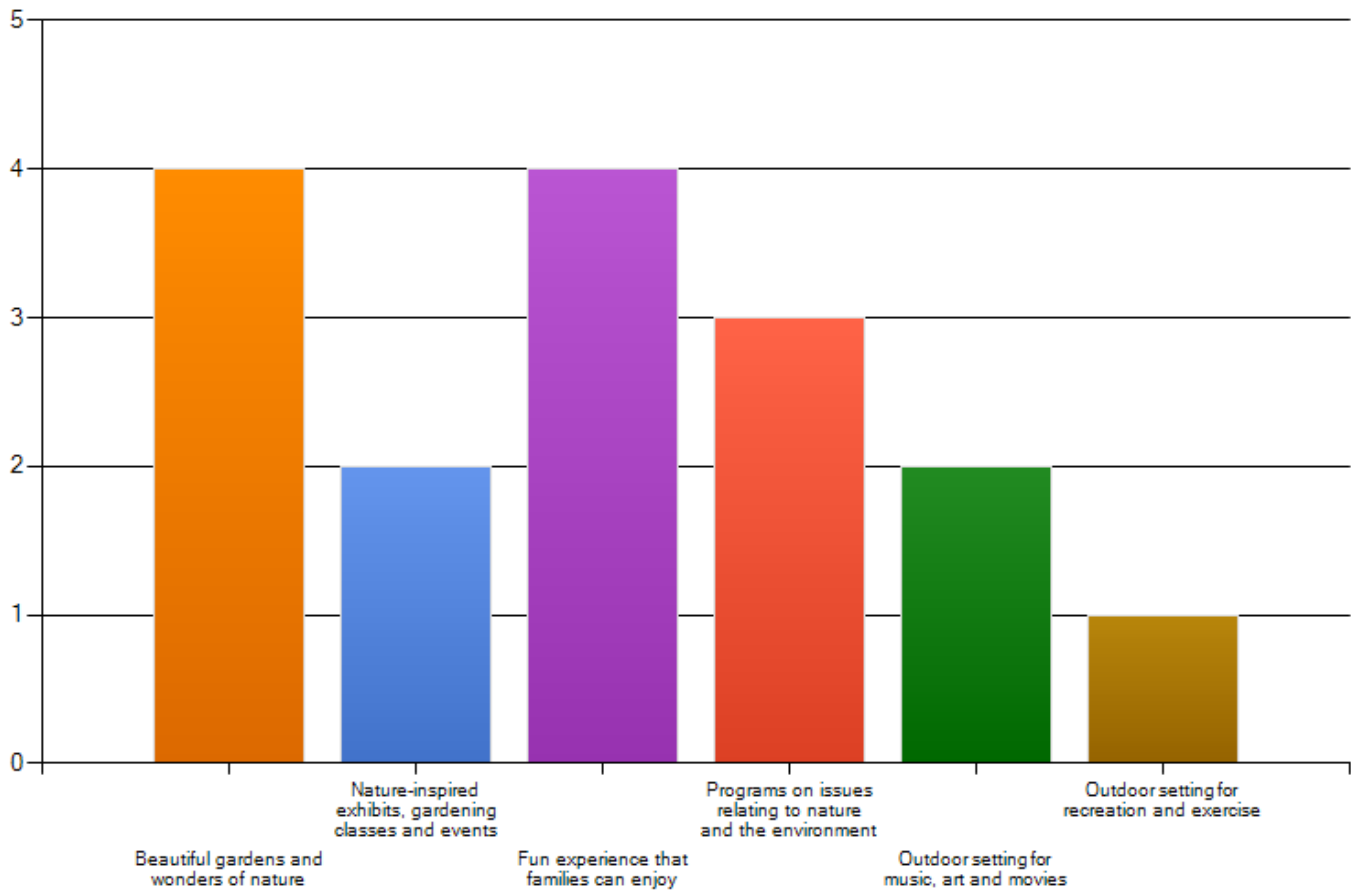
nature explorer for all ages as a more contemporary Arboretum brand personality while still supporting active gardener as an ongoing brand identity.

The strategists were mixed on prime messaging for what makes a great family outing: half opted for doing things at your own pace; with others selecting activities for different ages or discovery of something fun or new. In identifying future prospects, all strategists stressed keeping the current audience while looking across generations to include common interests. Strategists named three growth segments for audiences: families with young children, and cross- generations of gardeners and nature lovers. All strategists somewhat agreed to re-position the Arboretum brand as a place for families to discover nature at their own pace.

Conclusions and recommendations from strategists' research insights posit: 1) extend brand experience beyond gardens and plants heritage, 2) evolve brand identity of enjoying gardens to exploring nature and outdoor leisure activity, 3) expand brand offer beyond affinity for gardens or expertise of plants, and 4) grow audience segments of young families and cross-generations of gardeners, nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts.

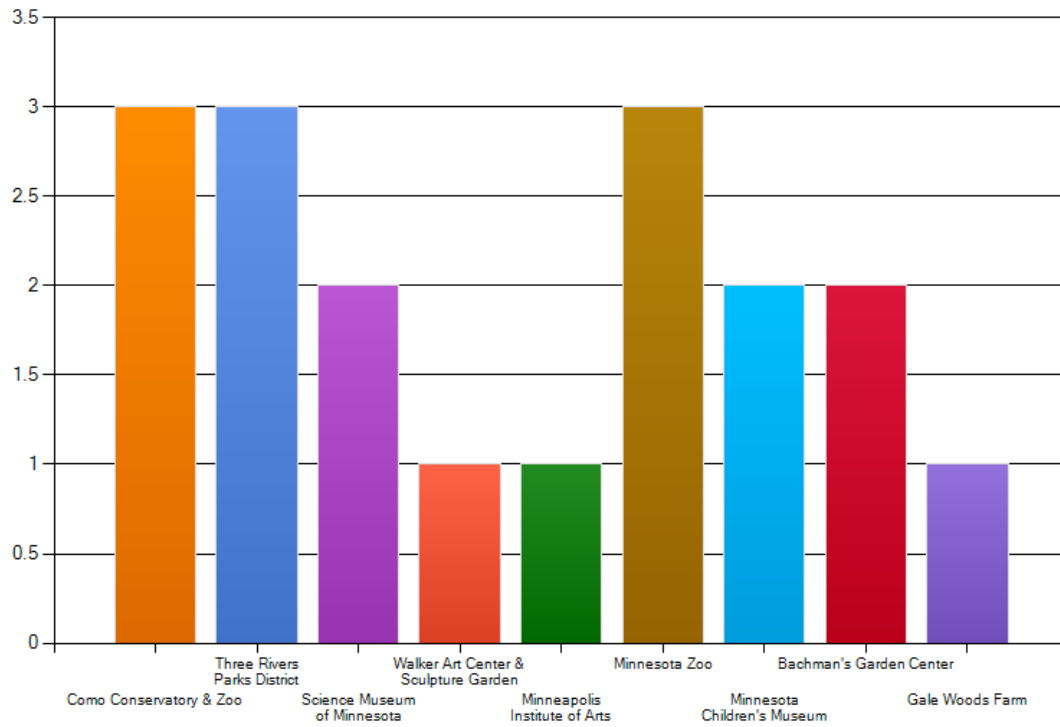
Qualitative survey chart 1

To be a competitive metro area attraction, what are 'must-haves' for the Arboretum?
Check all that apply.



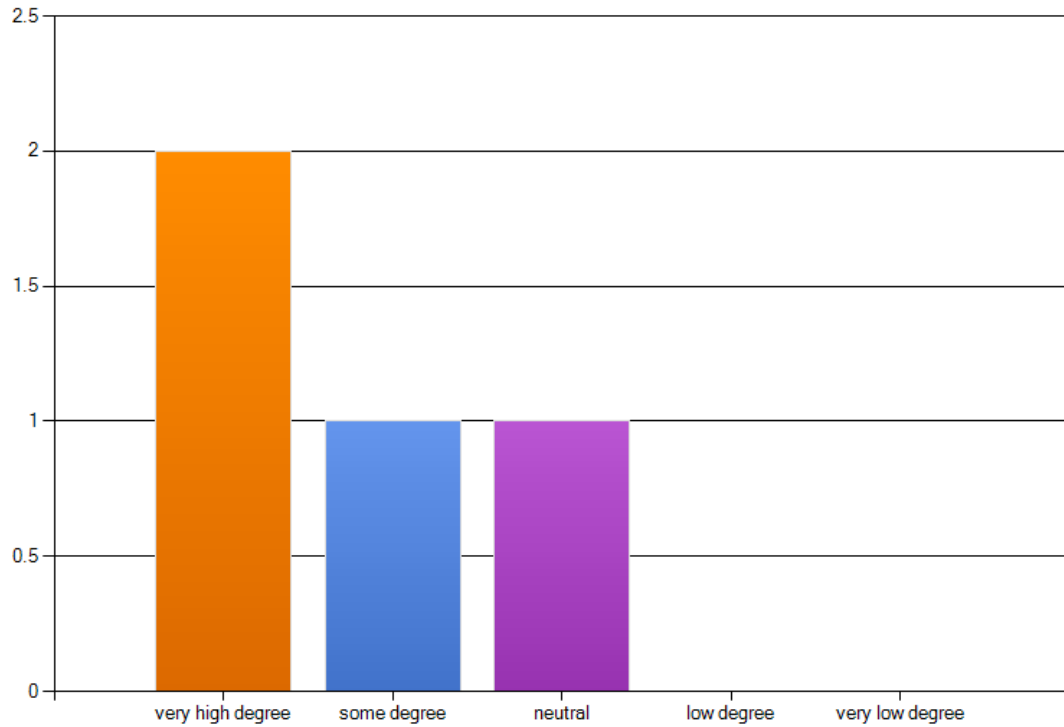
Qualitative survey chart 2

What brands compete directly with Arboretum brand for experience and audience. Check all that apply.



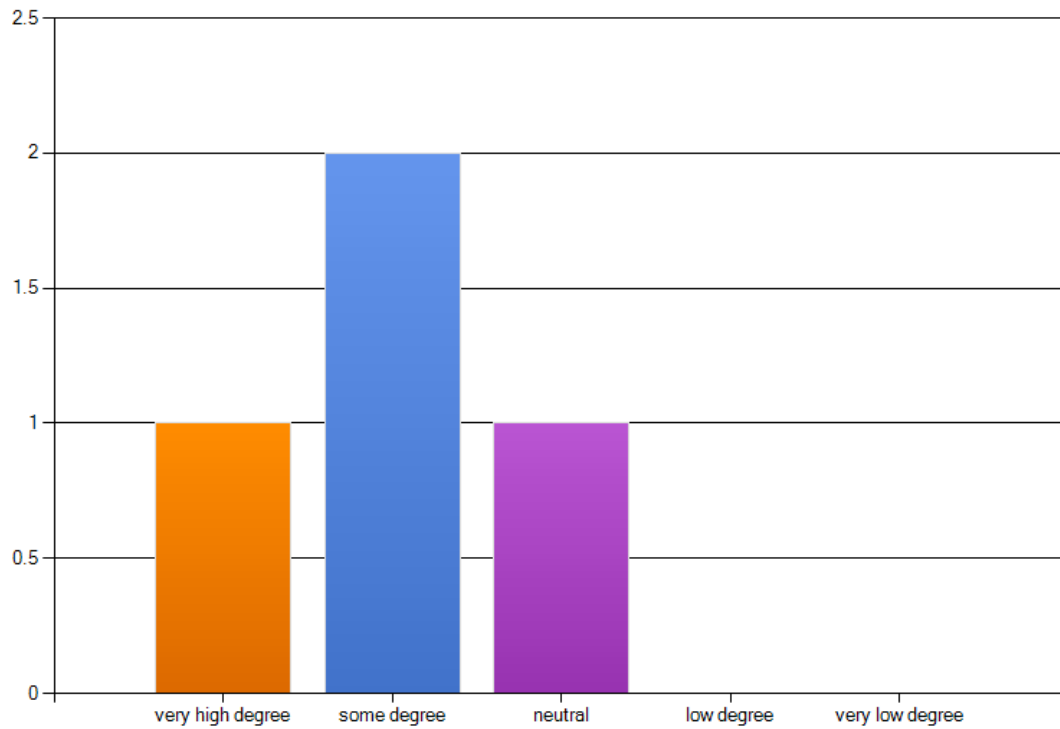
Qualitative survey, chart 3

To what degree do you perceive the general public believes the Arboretum has high credibility in area of beautiful gardens and wonders of nature?



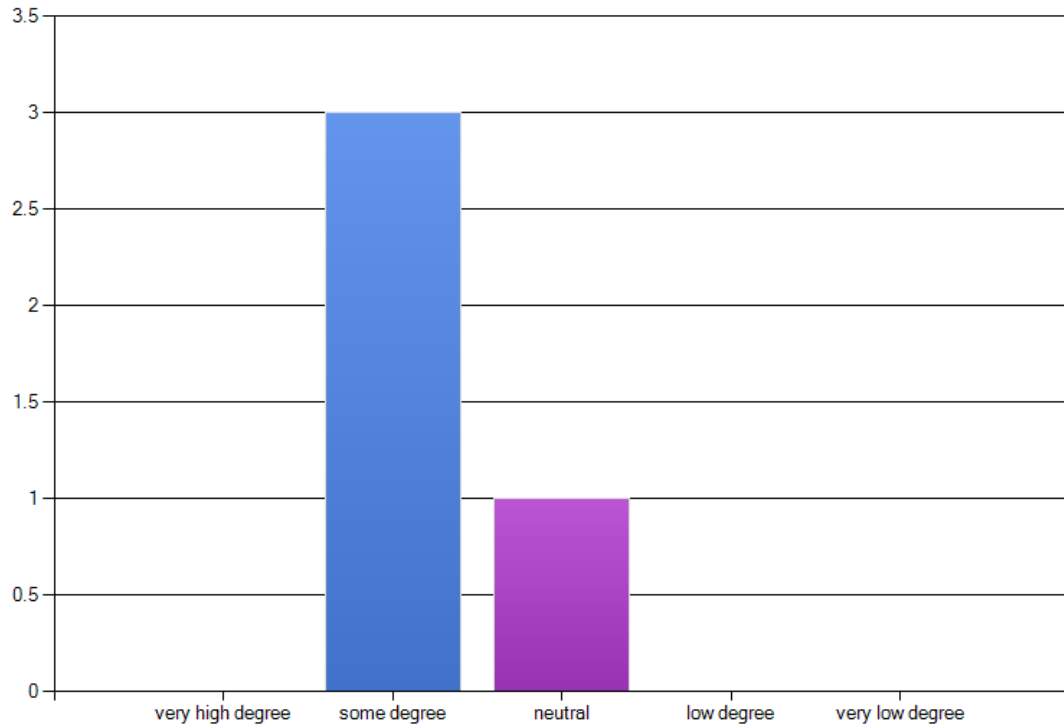
Qualitative survey chart 4

To what degree do you perceive the general public believes the Arboretum has high credibility for nature-inspired exhibits, gardening classes and events



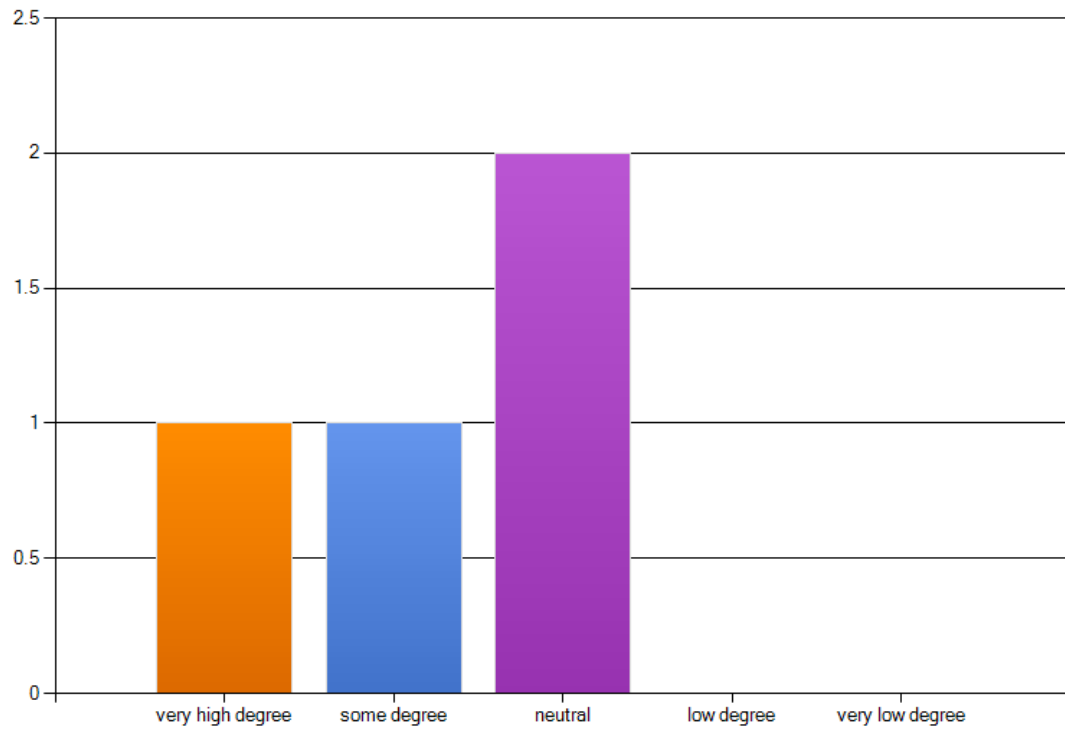
Qualitative survey chart 5

To what degree do you perceive the general public believes the Arboretum has high credibility for a fun experience that families can enjoy.



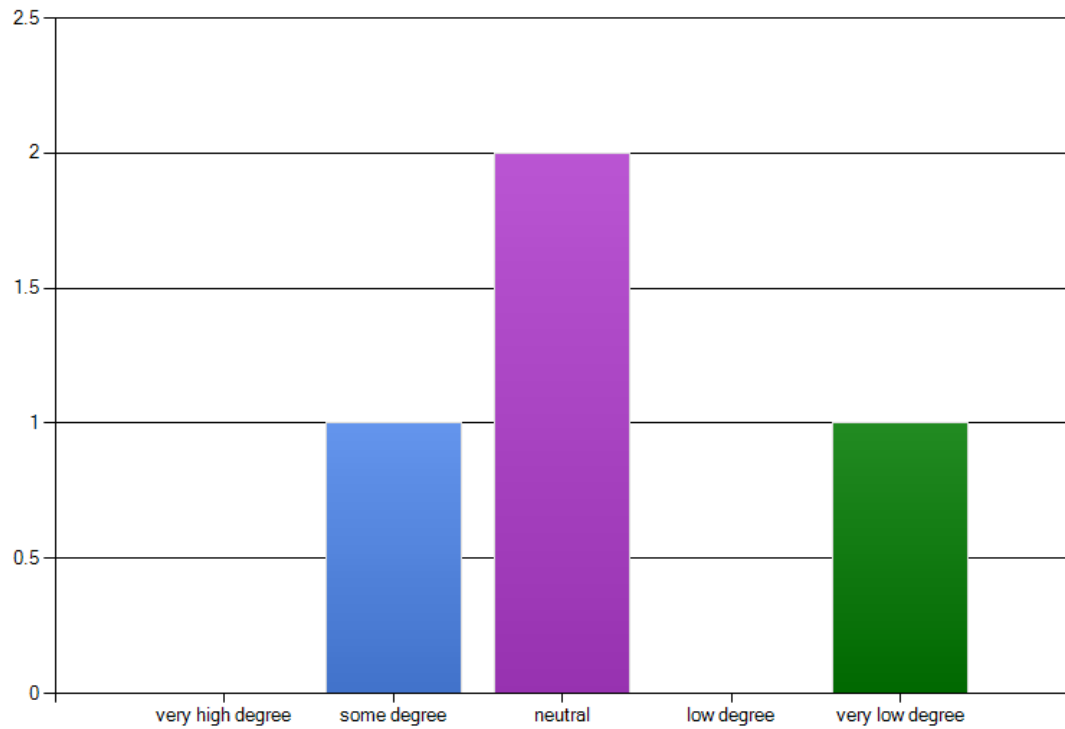
Qualitative survey chart 6

To what degree do you perceive the general public believes the Arboretum has high credibility for programs on issues relating to nature and the environment.



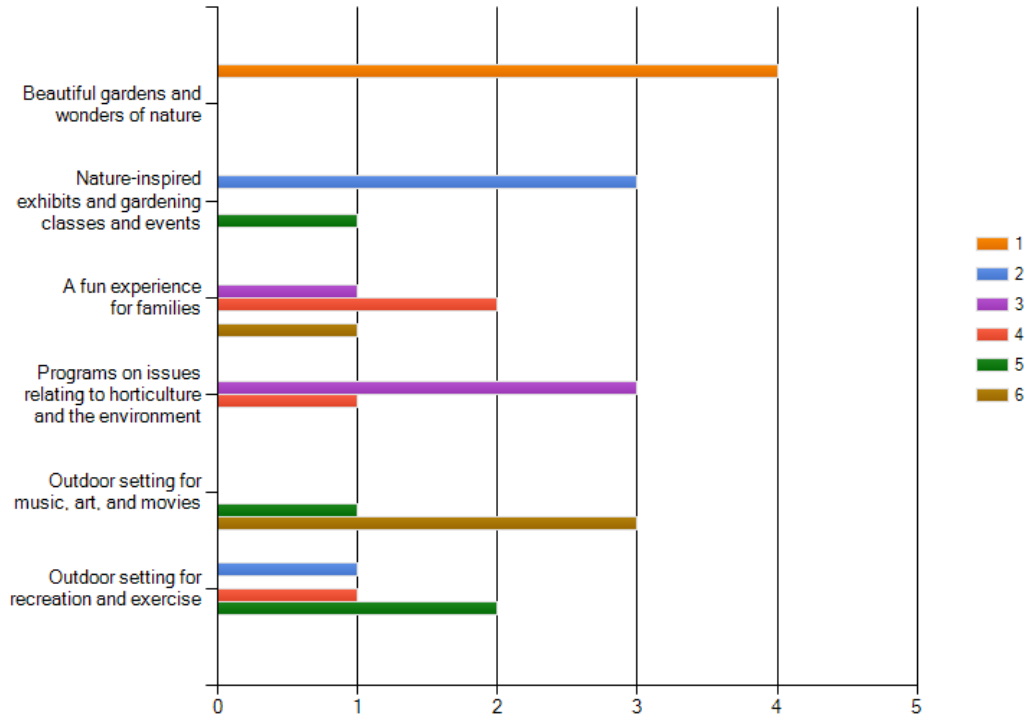
Qualitative survey chart 7

To what degree do you perceive the general public believes the Arboretum has high credibility for an outdoor setting for recreation and exercise.



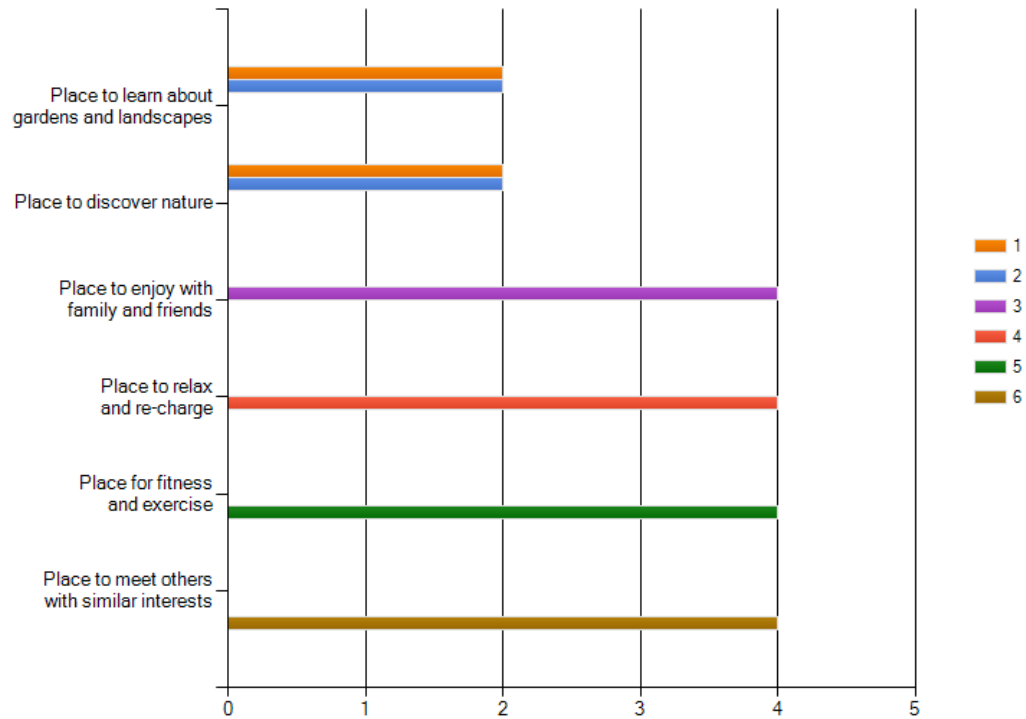
Qualitative survey chart 8

What category or subcategory could the Arboretum be the leader? Rank with 1 as most likely leader category and 6 as least likely leader category.



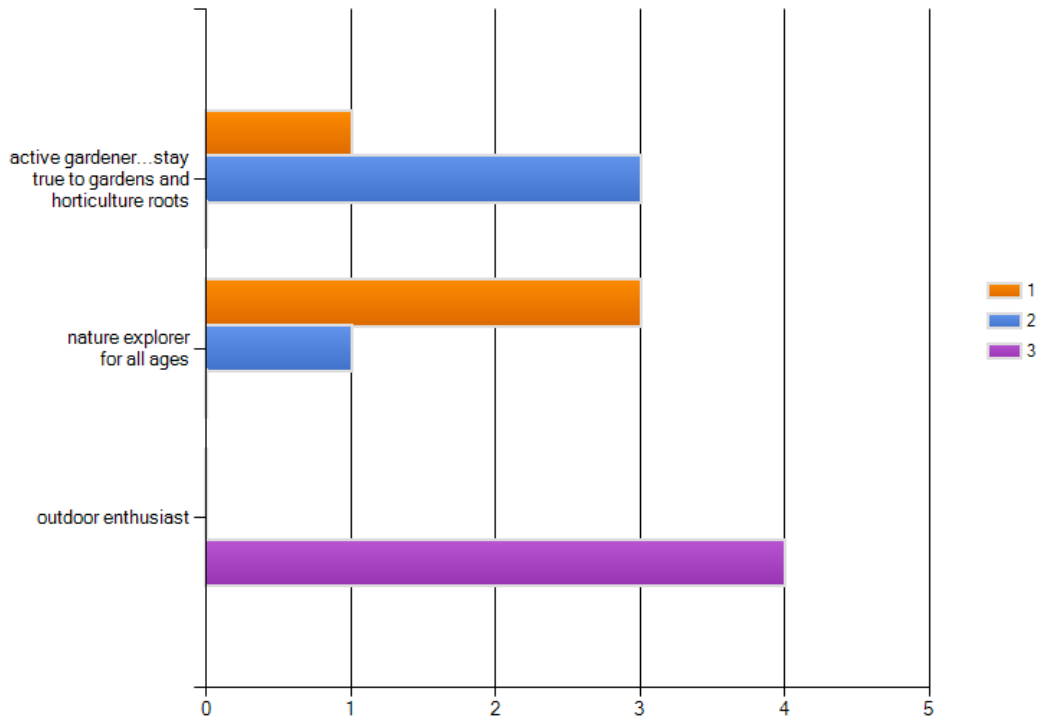
Quantitative survey chart 9

Which of these attributes best describes a place such as the Arboretum? Rank these attributes with 1 being the best and 6 being the least.



Quantitative survey chart 10

If you could refresh the Arboretum brand to be more contemporary, what personality would best fit. Rank your choices with 1 being the best choice.



Best Practices Framework/Opportunity

The opportunity centers on building relevance of the Arboretum brand in contemporary culture. The brand, rooted in horticultural heritage, serves a category in decline (Aaker 2012)—gardening (even with the past few years growth, are in one-third of households). To compete as a brand or risk loss of relevance in a dynamic marketplace, the Arboretum must cultivate experiences beyond the beauty of the garden to be meaningful and in tune with what consumers really want or need (Adamson 2010). The Arboretum can draw from best practices in a number of academic research and literature areas. One is the research presented by Louro and Cunha (2001) on brand management paradigms to create more brand value with a framework for defining competitive advantage, refining brand promise and aligning brand processes for best practices, defining focus and implementation with focus on product (marketing mix), projective (brand identity), adaptive (brand image) and relational (relationship). Research by da Silveira, Lages and Simões (2011) advances the notion of brand identity as “dynamic and emanating from multiple actors, e.g. brand managers and consumers” as a framework for visitor engagement (p. 1). Aaker and Adamson have argued reinventing a brand to respond to changing market conditions or evolve to be more relevant and fit the needs and interests of target consumers, without losing its core values. (p. 8). This research provides a strong foundation and inspiration for transforming the Arboretum brand in concert with co-creation of content and experience with consumers (e.g., members and visitors); transforming the brand to adapt to cultural changes and consumer attitudes (Aaker; da Silveira, Lages and Simoes); aspects of retro branding (Brown, et al, 2003) to boost an older brand; creating the experience to benefit from consumer perceptions of welcoming

and fun places for family and friends (Ballentyne, Parker & Hughes) (2008) and (Scott). While the Arboretum is making ‘discovery’ part of the fun in nature and outdoors, more insight is needed to explain why brand survey respondents cite “discovery” as important and the leisure survey respondents rank it lower. Findings will help create ‘after-hours’ conversation and cocktails in the gardens for millennial audience.

Research Limitations

The primary research surveys, although geared to different audiences, still serve as convenience samples and cannot be generalized to the population-at-large; with respondents unlikely to represent the population at large. Although the leisure survey on KARE 11.com would appeal to a slightly younger and non-Arboretum visitor audience, the respondents still tended to be more female than male. The same tendency held true for the convenience sample of leisure survey respondents as the neighbors, friends and colleagues responding were more female than male. However, females in the household tend to be primarily responsible for planning family or group outings.

Secondary research by the National Gardening Association indicates an uptick of homes with gardens, but most U.S. homes do not have gardens. The Arboretum may inadvertently exclude such households, based on what the Arboretum brand represents.

The brand strategists’ intensive survey findings offer strategic insights and creative direction for fall 2013 forward for Arboretum marketing and membership teams.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

How relevant is the Arboretum brand —more than a half-century old and rooted in horticulture—in contemporary culture? Conclusions point to a majority of respondents of both quantitative surveys as finding a nature center/arboretum relevant to their experience. The interpretation of what kinds of perceived and actual experiences by members and visitors as well as prospective visitors will obviously color their impressions, attitudes and call to action or behavior toward trial visits as well as repeat visits and potentially loyal Arboretum supporters or members.

In summary, primary quantitative research insights encourage a refresh of the brand experience around outdoor fun and leisure—as more appealing and fun in contemporary culture. Reshaping the Arboretum brand experience with a suite of outdoor experiences for multiple ages to connect to nature will appeal to young families and multiple generations—even those without an affinity for or deep knowledge of gardens. This welcomes a broader slice of visitors, invites engagement and co-creation in sharing outdoor experiences.

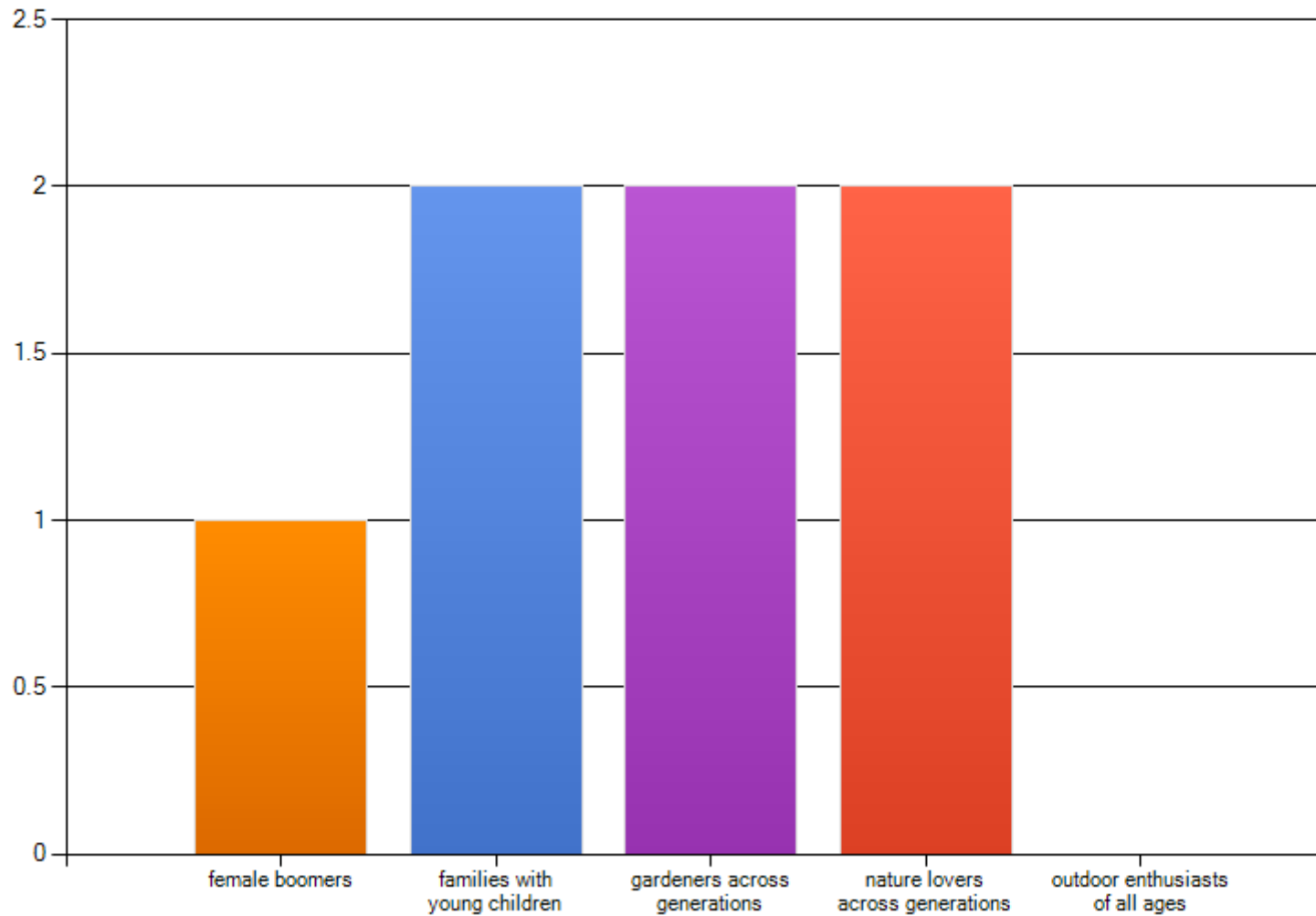
In summary, primary qualitative survey research insights urge extending the brand experience beyond gardens and plants heritage, evolving a brand identity from enjoying gardens to explore nature and outdoors, expanding the brand offer beyond affinity for gardens or expertise of plants, and growing audiences of young families and cross-generations of gardeners, nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts.

In summary, research **propositions** address two areas, with the first proposing to extend the brand experience beyond gardens and plants heritage. The research indicates extending the experience to explore nature and use outdoor setting for family fun and

recreation. The brand experience is reshaped from solely educating and teaching about horticulture to add discovery of outdoors and engagement in nature; with the brand offer refined to correlate with experiences informed by generational values, voices and milestones to better define brand experience to make a strong connection with a generation. The second proposes to expand the brand personality beyond active gardener. The research indicates expanding the personality to a more dynamic brand personality would evolve a “home gardener” to an “urban gardener,” “foodie” and “nature explorer.” The brand identity is reshaped from active gardener and casual observer of the gardens to nature explorer, a hip urban and modern family gardener; even foodie of garden bounty.

Quantitative survey chart 11

What demographic or psychographic groups best represent potential audience growth for the Arboretum. Select two choices.



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Appendices

Appendix 2: Explore Minnesota Top Attractions Rankings subset 2010

Appendix 3: USA Today, 2000 article

Appendix 4: Exhibit/Visitorship/Seasonal Features Comparisons

Appendix 5: 2013 Stowell Data® Twin Cities Consumer Market Profile/KARE 11

Appendix 6: Brand Survey

Appendix 7: eNews with brand survey link

Appendix 8: Leisure Survey

Appendix 9: KARE 11.com ads with survey link

Appendix 10: Brand Relevance Surveys and Intensive Interviews